

forward—don't we—to wave the championship banner above the Crawford High School.

All right, happy holidays.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:32 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen.

George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; professional baseball player Johnny Damon; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Joyce Rumsfeld, wife of Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. He also referred to the President's Commission to Strengthen Social Security (Moynihan Commission). The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 21, 2004

Laura and I have just come from a remarkable place called the Fisher House, a facility where wounded soldiers and their families are provided comfort during their trials. And we just want to thank the people who have supported the Fisher House, thank the folks here at Walter Reed for providing such incredibly good health care.

Today we had a rocket attack that took a lot of lives. Any time of the year it's a time of sorrow and sadness when we lose a loss of life. This time of year is particularly sorrowful for the families as we head into the Christmas season. We pray for them. We send our heartfelt condolences to the loved ones who suffer today. Just want them to know that the mission is a vital mission for peace. The idea of a de-

mocracy taking hold in what was a place of tyranny and hatred and destruction is such a hopeful moment in the history of the world.

And I want to thank the soldiers who are there and thank those who have sacrificed and the families who are worried about them during this Christmas season for their sacrifices. This is a very important and vital mission. I'm confident democracy will prevail in Iraq. I know a free Iraq will lead to a more peaceful world. So we ask for God's blessings on all who are involved in that vital mission.

Thank you very much. Have a good holiday.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:07 p.m.

Statement on Signing the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004

December 21, 2004

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 3242, the "Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act

of 2004" (the "Act"). The Act is designed to increase the competitiveness of fruits,